

Families have come to depend on these payments to cover the essentials like rent, groceries, heat, and clothing for their kids.

Just recently, I was home in Oregon, and I asked people what they spend the child tax credit on, and they said: “Ron, we spend it on things like shoes.”

And in our part of the world, it gets cold; it gets wet. We are not talking about luxury; we are talking about shoes for children.

Food insecurity among families dropped by about 25 percent since these child tax credit payments began. Child poverty has been cut nearly in half.

This program, in my view, is like Social Security for kids and vulnerable families. We never let Social Security checks for vulnerable seniors lapse.

For anybody who questions how valuable this program has been to American families, I want to just very briefly touch on a few messages that we have gotten from parents in a cross-section of communities across the country about how the child tax credit has helped them:

A parent in Kentucky: “It helped me with fuel for my car and provided me enough to buy my daughter a few things she needed.”

A parent in New York: “It’s helped take the burden off our family. My husband lost his job during COVID but since found another job, but the gap of the job loss was heavy.”

A parent in Alabama: “I was able to buy my daughter her school clothes.”

A parent in New Hampshire: “It has helped me tremendously especially when school was starting.”

So the message from American parents, from sea to shining sea, is the child tax credit has been vital to so many American families and lowering the cost of raising a family, ensuring they can provide that basic level of security all children deserve.

So at this point, I would ask, would the Senator from Florida modify his request to include the adoption of my amendment that is at the desk to extend the child tax credit for 1 year and pass the bill as amended?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the further modification?

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Reserving the right to object, as I understand this further modification, it would say let’s take a bill that is meaningful on an important global issue, something—an important human rights issue that everyone here supports, that we can pass right now, today, and send it to the President and he can sign it tonight or tomorrow morning and it becomes law because everyone supports it, using this process we are using here, and in addition to that, set up votes on two nominees and an Assistant Secretary, at a time when speech after speech out here has been about how we are not getting to these nominees and Assistant Secretaries—so

we can do all that but only if we add to it something that has bipartisan opposition; that, no matter what, at least 50 people here are against. It cannot pass unanimously, and even if it could and it did pass, we would have to send it back over to the House, not to the President, and the House isn’t even in session until January 10.

That doesn’t sound like a good arrangement to me, and it is something that I would have to object to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I listened carefully to my colleague from Florida, and because of his objection, there isn’t going to be an opportunity for the Senate to take two bold steps tonight.

I already indicated—made it very clear—that I am completely sympathetic to my colleague from Florida, my colleague from Oregon, to the fight against genocide and forced labor. They got me at “hello” on their proposition.

I also feel incredibly strongly—incredibly strongly—about our vulnerable children and our vulnerable families who are going to be cut off from an essential lifeline unless the U.S. Senate acts.

And, unfortunately, because of the objection from my colleague from Florida, we are not going to have a chance to take two bold steps tonight. That is what I am for. That is what I believe the American people are for.

You bet we are against forced labor. You bet we are against genocide. But we also have had a long tradition of standing up for vulnerable kids, vulnerable families, and tonight we could have obtained two bold objectives here in the U.S. Senate.

I think it is unfortunate that my colleague from Florida is unwilling to do that. Vulnerable families are going to be hurt as a result of the objection. I just want the Senate to know there was another way. There was another way we could have stood with the effort to deal with genocide and forced labor and protected families. They weren’t mutually exclusive. We could have done both. I think it is unfortunate the Senate is not doing it.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

CHINESE POLITICAL PRISONERS

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, in 1948, the world came together to adopt the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights to declare with one voice that every single person on Earth is “born free and equal in dignity and

rights.” They declared that “no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile”; that “everyone has the right to freedom of thought” and everyone has a right to “freedom of opinion and expression.”

This is Yu Wensheng, a human rights lawyer based in Beijing. His rights are being denied to him because he is arbitrarily detained after being arrested for exercising freedom of expression and freedom of opinion.

Yu has a history of ruffling feathers in Beijing. He is known for criticizing the Communist Party, for supporting the “Yellow Umbrella” movement for rights in Hong Kong, and for taking on politically sensitive cases. Beijing has retaliated by destroying his legal career and making it impossible for him to practice law.

Yu Wensheng has been in Chinese custody since January of 2018 because he dared to publish an open letter calling for political reforms, such as holding fair elections.

The day after he published that letter calling for fair elections, law enforcement officers, including police and armored vehicles, confronted him while he was walking his son to school and forced him into a police vehicle on suspicion of “picking quarrels and provoking troubles.” Police had no regard for his son’s safety at that moment. Authorities later added the charge of “inciting subversion,” a charge often used against human rights advocates and typically carrying a sentence of up to 5 years.

Two years would go by before Yu was allowed to speak to his wife; 2 years before he was allowed to speak to his son; 2 years before he was allowed to meet with his defense lawyers. During those 2 years, he was secretly tried and convicted. In June of 2020, he was sentenced to 4 years in prison—all without any defense lawyers present, without his family being even informed.

He suffered greatly during this incarceration. He was beaten up by a group of inmates and sustained injuries to his head. His right hand suffered nerve damage—damage that occurred in a previous detention—and is now shaking so violently, he can barely use it. He has had to learn to write with his left hand.

His appeals have been denied. He was sent to serve his sentence in a prison 600 miles away from Beijing despite repeated requests from his wife that he serve out his sentence closer to home so his family could visit.

That type of action is the exact opposite of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, that declaration that no one should be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile. This man was subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, and exile simply for expressing the opinion that there should be fair elections. He is not alone.

Today, I will also highlight a Chinese journalist. Her name is Haze Fan. She worked in Beijing for Bloomberg, covering global business issues. Before

working with Bloomberg in 2017, she worked for other major international outlets, household names like Reuters, CNBC, CBS, and Al Jazeera.

On December 7, 2020, just over a year ago, Ms. Fan was being escorted from her apartment by security officials. She was detained on suspicion of endangering China's national security, although a year later, the investigation into Ms. Fan is still ongoing, with no details of what she is accused of or even where she is held. She was a journalist, and a message is being sent.

Certainly, this is not consistent with the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights that says that everyone has the right to freedom of thought and to freedom of opinion and expression because for being a journalist, she is being detained.

As I stand here at this moment, 127 journalists like Haze Fan are detained in China, according to the statistics compiled by Reporters Without Borders. It is no wonder that China is at the very bottom of Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index, right there with North Korea, Turkmenistan, and Eritrea.

This is what is happening in a country that just 7 weeks from now will be hosting the Olympic Games—Games meant to be a celebration of camaraderie, physical achievement, and lifting up the human spirit. But it is Yu Wensheng and Haze Fan and all others like them detained by the Chinese Government for demanding the recognition that all are “born free and equal in dignity and rights” who deserve to have their spirits lifted up. They deserve to know where the world stands. Does the world stand with them?

Now, the United States and the United Kingdom, joined by Canada and joined by Australia—they have declared diplomatic boycotts of February's Games. I am very proud that the Government of the United States has declared this boycott. They said that they will not join the fanfare of the Games, helping China to disguise the egregious human rights abuses against individuals like these; that we will not stand with our diplomats at those opening ceremonies when China has stripped the political rights of every single citizen in Hong Kong. We will not have our diplomats there in opening celebrations, helping China cover up its genocide against the Uighur people. But tonight, I am wondering where the rest of the free world is.

You know, I was thinking a little bit about the history of France—the history of France being very engaged in human rights issues. France stood with the United States as an ally when we fought for our freedom. France gifted our Nation with the symbol of freedom, the Statue of Liberty, whose torch is held up to the world. France authored the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen not in 1990 but in 1789—one of the very first documents laying out the foundations of human

rights, defining individual and collective rights. Where is France tonight—standing with the United States and Canada and Australia? They are not there.

I am really disappointed to hear President Macron saying that any such boycott would be “insignificant.” Do you know what is significant? Going to the opening celebrations and helping China cover up genocide and stripping Hong Kong of political rights. It is not just significant and substantial, it is wrong.

France, we call on you to continue the tradition of fighting for freedom, the tradition that led you to stand with us, that led you to send us the Statue of Liberty, that led you to craft one of the first documents in the world for human rights in 1789.

The Education Minister of France argued that sport should be separate from political interference. When you put the Games in a nation engaged in genocide, you put the athletes in the middle of the worst of world horrors and ask them to be complicit in covering up by engaging in the Games as if nothing else was going on.

You know, it was 1936 that the Olympic Games were held in Hitler's Germany. He was already engaged in serious human rights violations. He turned down those violations during the Games, and the world said: Germany is coming back into the family of nations. We did not as a world highlight his ongoing crimes at that time, which emboldened him to horrific acts that followed soon upon the close of those Games. That was a mistake, to help Hitler cover up the human rights abuses of the Nazis, and it is a mistake for us now to help China cover up its horrific human rights abuses.

So I call on France to join us in this boycott, this diplomatic boycott, to say: Yes, it is too late for the Games to move. I regret that. I called on them to be moved. But it is not too late to strip away the pomp and circumstance of the opening Games. It is not too late to call out the serious, egregious conduct occurring in China—not some petty serious problem but genocide and the crushing of the entire state of Hong Kong, the entire entity of Hong Kong, in terms of their political rights.

France, join us, as you have over time, in standing for human rights.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, as the Senate's schedule for this calendar year begins to wind down, hopefully with the anticipation of spending time with our friends and families during this holiday season, I want to look back over some of the deadlines that the majority leader, the Senator from New York, has set for Senate action and to ask whether these sort of arbitrary deadlines and attempts to do legislation essentially along party lines is the right way to actually get things done in the Senate.

We have excellent examples of how to get things done. Today, we passed the Defense authorization bill with a strong bipartisan vote. But we know that when either political party decides to do things unilaterally, especially in a 50-50 Senate, it makes the work immeasurably harder, and that is for a good reason.

The Founders of this country and our Constitution and the creators of this Senate looked to the Senate to be a deliberative body and looked for us to do what sometimes doesn't come naturally, which is to work together to build consensus. But, as I said, when one party or the other attempts to do things unilaterally, it usually means what you see here, which is one blown self-imposed deadline after another.

First of all, the majority leader set a July 21 target for Senate action on a budget resolution.

He laid out an August deadline for a partisan election takeover bill, which would have preempted State and local laws, which are responsible, under our division of responsibility in the Constitution, under our Federal system, for conducting elections.

Then he proudly announced his goal to get two bills to President Biden's desk by the end of October. He said those would be joined together—a bipartisan infrastructure bill that is the exception to the rule—actually like the Defense authorization bill that actually enjoyed broad bipartisan support—but the hangup was the other part of that proposition, which was the Democrats' multitrillion-dollar partisan spending bill.

Of course, not one single one of these deadlines was met—again, because it is hard to do things in a 50-50 Senate when you try to do it unilaterally without doing the hard work of building consensus, which is the way the Founders wanted this institution to work.

So our colleague from New York kept setting deadlines and blowing right past them, and it looks like he is about to add another one to the list. Senator SCHUMER's latest deadline for the “Build Back Bankrupt” bill is December 25. That is Christmas. While he has yet to make an official announcement, news reports are starting to confirm what we have known all along—that the Senate will not vote on this bill by Christmas because it is just not ready for prime time.

Before our colleagues can bend the rules of the Senate to pass their partisan, multitrillion-dollar spending bill, they have got a lot of roadblocks to overcome. The most obvious is they need a bill to vote on. This bill is not even in final form yet. As a matter of fact, the Senate Finance Committee, on which I have the pleasure of serving, released about 1,100 pages of new text on Saturday, and there are at least 20 different issues that have been raised with the Parliamentarian which need to be litigated in a deliberative process, but the version of the legislation